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## **ARE WE REALLY HOLLOW MEN? : A SEARCH FOR THE ROOT IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY.**

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Now-a-days we are passing through an era of moral and ethical anemia. The wheel of progress has unveiled the mysteries of the universe beyond Milky Way or the mysteries of God Particle. But the wheel may be clogged up with the deterioration and corrosion of human values. The outward glittering cannot hide the hollowness of our inner beings. It is true that different aspects of moral and ethical deterioration were rampant in human society since the dawn of civilization. In modern society, the nature and scope of moral and ethical corrosion varies in accordance with caste, creed, gender, economic and social conditions etc. But the root or basic causes are almost same. This re -search for the root is the aim of this research article. It is a discourse on the context of 21 st century Indian urban society. The root can be traced in bringing up a child. A child is not only a father of man but a father of a future nation also. Unfortunately, a child is enlisted in the rat-race from his cradle. He/she becomes a victim of parental ambition and is brought up as a project, a mission, an ambition, a target, an investment, a settlement or a requirement. A child's potentiality, creativity, maturity are mocked. His/her imagination, passion and emotion are knocked. There is no parental care in the matter of the development of heart and soul. Consequently, their blood is thickened and emotion is dried up, but their brains shine in use. Knowledge they have much; but wisdom hey do lack. Naturally, the end product is neither for the use of family or society nor for the use of any nation. Herein lies the birth of hollow men who suffer from moral, ethical, spiritual, and physical paralysis. Besides in the fabric of our family, society, education system, nation etc., the root causes of moral and ethical degradation of young generation lie dormant. This paper also throws a flood of light on the probable consequences, remedies and recommendations that social scientists and educationists may utilize for the betterment of postmodern society.

Keywords: society, moral, ethical, degradation, parents, child, hollow men.



“We are the hollow men

We are the stuffed men

Leaning together

Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!”

(“The Hollow Men” – by T.S. Eliot, Lines: 1 - 4)

## 1) Introduction:

21<sup>st</sup> century is often hailed as an era of “Information and Communication Technology” (ITC). With the advancement of science and technology, present day society is divided into two aspects – i) Physical Society and ii) Web Society. The “social media” has given birth to a new citizenship which can be called Netizenship( Net +Citizenship) or Cyber Citizenship. The world is rapidly changing with shower and sunshine. The wheel of progress has unveiled the mysteries of the universe beyond the Milky Way or the mysteries of the God Particle. Human civilization is approaching towards unlocking the mysteries of the Black Holes. But the Golden Holes of human heart are still shrouded in mystery and gradually turning into black holes which can destroy the whole world (unlike the Black Holes which created the Universe). These black holes of human heart give birth to hollow men who are emotionally barren, spiritually empty, physically Homosapiensspecies, mentally unstable and socially unsocial. Somehow, the sting connecting the heart and the head is losing its balance and corroding gradually day by day. The outward glittering and sky-scrapers of 21<sup>st</sup> century, can’t hide the hollowness of our inner beings. Naturally, the wheel of progress may be clogged up with the deterioration and the corrosion of human values. It is very hard to believe that we are passing through an era of moral and ethical anemia. Practicing moral and ethical norms of life have become so rare that anyone obeying the principles of moral and ethical standard is considered insane, mad, a laughing stock and a scape goat for all. That person is mockingly called, “Truthful Judhistir.” On the other hand, we are, now, so busy that “We have no time to stand and stare “or “No time to wait and watch”. We are always rushing to and fro. The Victorian poet Mathew Arnold in his famous poem “The Scholar Gipsy” (Published in 1853) brilliantly writes about the

“Strange disease of modern life,

With its sick hurry, its divided aims.

Its heads oértax’d, its paralised heart....”



Truly, hurry, worry and curry increase our misery. Owing to moral and ethical degradation, now-a-days rape is a common incident, polygamy is human nature, corruption is a part of co-operation, plagiarism is normal in research, smoking or drinking wine is like normal eating and drinking, filing a divorce is a must if there is a little bit adjustment problem, bribery is the best way to achieve something and so on and so forth. If moral and ethical standard of our present society fails to rise in course of time keeping pace with the advancement of science and technology, modern civilization will perish, like some ancient civilizations. Our institutions of learning as well as modern parents are over-emphasizing on the development of mind alone, with very little or without moral, ethical emotional, physical and spiritual development. Consequently, efficiently and competent individuals are produced but not good and responsible citizens. Here in lies the birth of hollow men.

## 2) Objectives of the study:

- i) To be familiar with the phenomena called hollowness in human beings at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of the 21st century.
- ii) To find out the root for being hollow.
- iii) To portray the characteristics of such individuals.
- iv) To investigate the role of parents, educational and social institutions, mass media and the Nation.
- v) To find out some possible ways out and recommendations to save our posterity

## 2) Methodology:

The methodology applied in the paper is qualitative in nature. Here the secondary information have been collected from various books, reports, research journa

ls, news papersetc. Internet source and web sides are also consulted for the purpose.

## 4) Significance of the study:

- i) This critical discourse will create awareness among the young generation, parents, teachers and different social institutions so that they can live a peaceful life.
- ii) The root of various moral and ethical problems can easily be understood by this study
- iii) It will open up new vistas for the social scientists and the educationists in determining the



future course of action to restore moral and ethical standard

iv) The present study will encourage further research on the topic.

## 5) Analysis and Findings:

“The Time is out of joint. O cursed spite,

That ever I was born to set it right.”

(Shakespeare’s Hamlet”. Act-I, Scene-V, Lines – 196-197)

Hamlet proclaimed it 418 years ago. But the present scenario still remains the same. The whole world is facing a tremendous moral and ethical crisis. Corruption, exploitation, communalism, racism, separatism, nepotism, injustice, untouchability, bribery, black-marketing smuggling etc. have become the order of the day. The moral and ethical degradation and corrosion were rampant in our society since the dawn of civilization. But the nature of the new toxic or degrading environment is totally different from that of the past.

Today, “morality” and “ethics” have just become words sleeping in the dictionary or books on the subjects. These words have lost its denotative meanings. Different connotative meanings have given birth to many complex ideas or concepts. Behaviorists, Social-cultural Theorists, Cognitive Psychologists, Psychoanalysts, Biologists etc. define morality and ethics in their own way. “This heterogeneity results in a confusing picture of the moral person” (Berkowitz, 1997). Naturally, it is very confusing for scholars and social scientists to define these two terms correctly. Therefore, in this article, I have tried to put due importance to those human qualities which are universal. The lacking of these qualities have turned the modern men into a hollow men who do not have any regard for morality and ethics. An attempt has been made, here, to re-think the issue of moral and ethical degradation.

Let us first define and differentiate morals and ethics in general way. Many use the two terms as synonyms, but there are subtle differences. Morals are the social, cultural and religious beliefs or values of an individual or group which tells us what is right or wrong. They are the rules and standards made by the society or culture. Morals refer to what is considered right for any situation. Some moral principles are: to be loyal, to tell the truth, to be generous, not to cheat etc. On the other hand, ethics is known as moral philosophy. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the principles of conduct of an individual or group. To put it simply, every single individual has some principles which help him throughout his life to cope up with any adverse situation; they are known as ethics. It works as a guiding principle as to decide what is good or bad. Some ethical principles are: honesty, integrity, loyalty, truthfulness etc.



In the postmodern society, the nature and scope of moral and ethical corrosion vary in accordance with caste, creed, gender, age economic and social conditions etc. But the root or the basic causes are almost the same. This re-research for the root is the aim of this research article. It is a discourse on the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century Indian urban society. The root can be traced in bringing up a child. It is always proclaimed that the younger generation have become morally and ethically bankrupt. But, it is the older generation who have consciously or unconsciously, lost their sense of morality first. The younger generation pays more attention to what an adult does than what an adult merely says. Consequently, the younger generation follows the traditions and the ideas set or executed by the older generation who, on the contrary, desire earnestly that the younger generation would follow the normal code and conduct of moral and ethical behavior. So, it is the duty and the responsibility of the older generation to create examples in front of them to save the posterity from any kind of moral or ethical deterioration. Otherwise, the hollow men would always beget hollow men. This is the root for the fall of moral and ethical standard.

The time has come to re-examine the role of parents, the educational and the social institutions and other related factors to achieve a sustainable social, moral, ethical development. The scholars down the ages have thought a lot over the type of person a child would become and a wealth of data has been amassed regarding the development of morality in the next generation. Let us re-examine or re-think the role of parents, family, educational and social institutions, mass media etc. to transform an innocent child into a hollow man.

### 5.1. Role of Parents and Family:

It is well-known that mother is the first teacher and home is the first school. Without harmony at home no harmony can be achieved in the life of a child who is bound to walk on the disturbing strings of life and society. A home is the microcosm of the whole society or the whole nation. The parents are the first living examples of social and filial behavior that children see before them and learn to follow or imitate. "Child's effectiveness in dealing with the social world emerges largely from experiences in close relationships" (Hartup, 1989). A recent research shows that in the next 25 years our urban society is going to face "less stable marriages and less stable families". When families are unstable, when parents themselves are immoral, when parents are absent or emotionally distant, the learning of moral values by children is greatly disturbed or hindered. Naturally, the available empirical evidence indicate that the deterioration of stable marriages and families has been the root or the principal source of moral decline among the young generation.

In the modern nuclear family - the family of husband and wife living apart from other relatives – childhood becomes a different phenomenon. In urban area most of the parents remain outside the door throughout the day for economic necessity. Their home no longer become "a



home, sweet home” for children. According to sociologist Allelic Hochschild, “the more time they spend at work, the more hectic home becomes, and the more they want to escape back to work. Eventually, work becomes there home, and home becomes work.” They cannot give the quality time which a child requires in its formative years. Besides, children are deprived of the love, affection, compassion, care and guidance of their grand-parents who may be their best friends within a family. To fill in the gap of grand-parents, the commercial toy industry, children’s book industry, and cartoon channels have come into being. They grow up with lifeless or animated toys. But the best toys a child can have is a parent who gets down on the floor and plays with the child.

The cartoon channels give the parents momentary relief. But its negative impact is far reaching. Tom and Jerry are always fighting; Motu and Patlu are always beaten by Boxer Bhaiya without any valid reason; some heroes are jumping from high or flying in the sky and so on.. Children love to remain in the world of fancy. These negative aspects remain in their subconscious mind and come into being on demand. Thus, our next generation grows-up with watching cartoons, eating fast-food and reading books, and no playing in the field. They become, consequently, unsocial, unhealthy, arrogant, and lazy, which generate in them some different types of problems leading to the birth of hollow men. According to social psychologist William Damon, “the child’s respect for authority is the single most important moral legacy that comes out of the child’s relationship with the parents”.

Now, children are taught to count their chicken before they hatch. Urban parents don’t want their children to involve in any work of family or society. They are advised “Just go on reading and perform well in the exam” They are told to “perform well” in the pre-primary classes, “perform well” in primary classes, “perform their best” in board exams, “perform the most” in graduation, and “perform the utmost and the possible” for the rest of their lives. If children are born and brought up with such mentality and attitude, they become the master in the art of performance without considering any moral or ethical matters. To them the world is a stage and to perform their best is their first and foremost job. Naturally, when the children become adults, they go on performing their job leaving behind first their old parents in some “Old Age Homes”. Next, they leave their own society and even their nation and settle elsewhere or in abroad. They are definitely the excellent product of their parents and the educational institutions to be sold at market. But the end product, undoubtedly, is of no use for the benefit of the larger society or of humanity. They always perform well and thus run after money, promotion and comfort. In this way an innocent child becomes a hollow man.





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## 5.2. Role of Educational and Social Institutions:

“Education according to Indian tradition is not merely a means of earning of living, nor is it only a nursery of thought or a school for citizenship It is the initiation into a life of spirit, a training of human souls in pursuit of truth and practice of virtue” - Kothari Commission (1964 – 66).

These lines were recommended almost fifty-three years ago. But Indian education system has failed to achieve or execute it. The expressions like “life of spirit” and “training of human souls” are the key terms for the uplift of moral and ethical standard among Indian students. Unfortunately, present education system has over emphasized the development of mind and the development of memorization and reproduction. Only mental or intellectual development, and no development of heart or training of soul would lead to the birth of hollow men. Mahatma Gandhi brilliantly puts it thus, “Education aims at development of the 3Hs”: Head, Heart and Hand. He also says, “Education is, thus, an awakening of the soul”. Moral and ethical standard would automatically rise with the implementation of the concept of the development of 3Hs.

Another aspect of present education system is that it is completely knowledge based. Knowledge is the passive acquisition of data of facts, whereas wisdom requires the additional steps of applying judgment and drawing conclusions or changing behavior. Students of this century have much knowledge but wisdom they do lack. To open the door of knowledge through Google Sir is easier than opening the door of a house. The whole encyclopedia is always in their pocket and everyone is just a walking encyclopedia.

The parents, the teachers and the students should have a clear conception about the distinction among knowledge, intelligence and wisdom. Albert Einstein has justly said, “True sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination”. On the other hand, to acquire knowledge one must study, but to acquire wisdom we must observe. Thus, the imaginative and the observation power make a man intelligent and wise. In this way an uneducated person may be more intelligent and wise than an educated person with vast knowledge on a particular subject. Here in lies the importance of developing imaginative and observation power. A knowledgeable educated person without imaginative and observation power is no other than a hollow man.

Present Indian curriculum gives no importance to the development of imaginative or observation power. Einstein, Rabindranath, Netaji, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Swami Vivekananda had their imaginative and observation power. They, consequently, had their noble spirit and soul, thereby making them morally and ethically strong. According to Winston Churchill, “The first duty of the university is to teach wisdom, not trade, character, not technicalities.”



The cut-throat competition to achieve material success has mad man hollow. Today, students are taught “All is well that ends well”. Naturally, obtaining good marks and settling in life is the ultimate goal, no importance to the means. I am very sorry to say that now education, like other consumer goods, is marketed by the profit motive. Schools are no more than teaching shops and students are no more than bookworms. Presently, scoring 90% or above marks or admission in medical or engineering colleges are the be-all and the end-all of education. Dr. Avhijit Choudhury, Director of Liver Foundation in West Bengal, India, in his famous article “*Intelligence Does not Create Good Doctors*” (Ananda Bazar Patrika, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2015) has excellently said that now medical colleges are full of a species of students who are intelligent as well as arrogant, corrupted, disrespectful and who have no love or respect for life. They are more interested in polishing their shoes than applying antiseptic dressing on a poor man’s ulcer. The root lies in faulty education system. These doctors would be no other than hollow doctors who are enemy of mankind.

### 5.3. Roll of Mass Media:

Now-a-days cell phone or android mobile has become a part and parcel of everyone’s life. Not to have a Facebook account or not available in Whatsapp are matters of shame to the young generation. The whole world is sorrowfully naked to all age groups. Their chatting from dusk to dawn is nothing but cheating themselves. It leads to many social problems, crimes, and wastage of valuable time. The vulgarities, violence, movies, images, different software, apps, games lead them to astray. No wonder brilliant students having no wisdom (Wisdom = experience of life + knowledge) fall easy prey to the deadly Blue Whale Game and commit suicide. The responsibility of parents also must not be ignored. The popularity of Selfi Phone or Facebook clearly indicates the self-centeredness and selfishness of human being. This attitude makes them hollow men. They take the risk of life to get more “Likes” (👍). They are “too soon elated and too soon depressed.” This is one of the characteristics of modern hollow men. The psychological, physiological, emotional and social impact of using cell phone too much, is still a great field of future research.

### 6) Recommendations:

Some recommendations to cease the birth of hollow men and to restore moral and ethical values among Indian youth are as follows:

- i. The older generation should be the role model to the young ones.
- ii. Parents ought to spend quality time with their children.
- iii. To socialize young ones, parents should involve their children to different social, religious and moral activities. We know helping hands are holier than praying lips.





- iv. Reward and punishment must go hand in hand in bringing up a child. But no physical punishment is recommended.
- v. Reading books on the great heroes of India or of the world would make them morally and mentally strong. Self-centeredness may also diminish in their way.
- vi. The text books of all subjects should have some moral and ethical matters related to the subject, like the inclusion of environmental issues.
- vii. An education commission is the urgent need of this time to frame a curriculum based on the development of moral and ethical aspects as well as the development of head, heart and hand(3Hs).
- viii. Every teacher should be first a moral education teacher and then only a teacher of the subject of his/her specialization.
- ix. Life-Style Education is not a Sex Education. It should be a compulsory subject based on moral, ethical, religious, social, psychological, physiological and emotional aspect of our life.
- x. Cell phone must be banned below the age 18 years.

### 7) Conclusion:

The world is really too much with us. We always look before and after, and pine for what is not. This dissatisfaction is also one of the reasons for the down fall of human values. The whole world is running after one thing or another. William Henry Davies (1871 -1940) lamented long ago for our poor life:

“A poor life this if, full of care  
We have no time to stand and stare  
 (“Leisure” – Published – 1911)

There are other factors also for the deterioration of moral and ethical standard. But the basic four factors are undoubtedly the parents / home, the educational and social institutions and the mass media. The probable responsibility in the making of a hollow man be distributed in the following ways.

Agents	Percentage (%)
Parents / Home	60 – 55
Education System	20 – 25
Society	10
Mass Media	10



Therefore, parents/home and the education system bear the 80% responsibility. If home is transformed into a “sweet home”, up to 60% of the entire problem may be solved. Our home is very much within our control. The change of education system in India may take a long time and we have no control over mass media and society. Therefore, just like charity begins at home, the restoration of the moral and the ethical values must begin at home. Then only, the society as a whole would come forward and the other minor factors would automatically be within our control.

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